



## Briefing Paper

# Recommendations for a Sustainable and Equitable Ocean Economic Recovery and Improved Resilience in a Post COVID-19 Environment in the CLME+ region

*CLME+ Interim Coordination Mechanism*



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The CLME+ Project is executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in close collaboration with a large number of global, regional and national-level partners. All are jointly referred to as the “CLME+ Project co-executing partners”.

The CLME+ Project Coordination Unit acted as the Secretariat of the CLME+ Interim Coordination Mechanism up and till the CLME+ Project End Date (31 October 2021).

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# CLME+ Interim Coordination Mechanism

The CLME+ SAP ICM was formally established in 2017, through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by 8 Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGO's) with an Oceans-related Mandate in the Wider Caribbean. It responds to a call for action under the CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP Strategy 3), and decision of the 1st Meeting of the UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project Steering Committee, held in 2016. In October 2021, its lifespan was extended beyond the CLME+ Project End Date, and its members extended to now include UN ECLAC, through an Addendum to the ICM MOU.

The ICM **enhances regional coordination and collaboration**, and **supports oversight and integration of actions** for sustainable fisheries and for the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment. The ICM **promotes** the **up-scaling** of actions by all sectors of society, to achieve the long-term vision of the CLME+ SAP of *“Healthy Marine Ecosystems that Provide Benefits and Livelihoods for the Peoples of the region”*.

The CLME+ Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM) consists of the following Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGO's) with an oceans-related mandate: UNEP CEP (represented through the Cartagena Convention Secretariat), FAO-WECAFC, IOCARIBE of the IOC of UNESCO, CRFM, OSPESCA, CCAD, the OECS Commission, the CARICOM Secretariat and UN ECLAC.

Starting 1 November 2021, the services of CLME+ ICM Secretariat are being provided collaboratively by the IOCARIBE of the IOC of UNESCO and the UNDP/GEF PROCARIBE+ PPG Coordination Unit.

More information on the ICM can be found on a [dedicated section of the CLME+ HUB](#) that acts as the ICM's regional, collaborative knowledge management hub.





## Introduction

COVID-19 has had unprecedented socio-economic impacts worldwide and in particular on the most vulnerable in our societies. The pandemic has hit the Latin American and the Caribbean region hard, notably in terms of employment, consumption and poverty. It is anticipated that the pandemic will lead to the most severe contraction in economic activity in the region's history (ECLAC, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. It is also exacerbating existing inequalities within society and forcing more people into extreme poverty.

Despite the serious challenges posed by the crisis, stimulus programmes and recovery responses can provide a great opportunity to refocus and build back more resilient and stronger economies. It is imperative that recovery plans integrate climate, nature and development objectives to support the ability of communities to be more resilient and adaptable. In embracing a transformative recovery, policymakers can enable the transition to the future economy we need to attain sustainable development globally.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Report on the economic impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Latin America and the Caribbean: study prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), at the request of the Government of Mexico in its capacity as Pro Tempore Chair of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), at the virtual ministerial meeting on health matters for response and follow-up to the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean, held on 26 March 2020 (LC/TS.2020/45), Santiago, 2020.



Along with other economic sectors, the pandemic has significantly disrupted ocean sectors and those who depend on it. However, recovery efforts that harness the blue economy could provide some relief to countries while delivering long-term benefits and building economic resilience to future shocks. In this context, concerted actions between intergovernmental organisations with an ocean mandate will be important to ensure that recovery efforts are coordinated and continue to make progress towards the achievements of the SDGs, and in particular SDG 14.

With this in mind, the purpose of this short briefing paper is to put forward some reflections and key messages that may be useful for the ICM, its member states and contracting parties, while integrating elements of the ocean economy into post-COVID-19 recovery efforts.



## **Integrating sustainable, equitable ocean economy in recovery programmes and investments initiated, supported and financed by countries, development partners, and regional and international organisations**

It appears that, so far, a limited number of investments made by governments, the private sector, development banks and other sectors for COVID-19 recovery have been directed towards the ocean economy, and that only a small fraction focuses on transitioning to a sustainable ocean economy. Most interventions have focused on short-term coping strategies to remediate the impacts of the crisis, but shifting this focus towards the development and implementation of longer-term resilience-building strategies will be important for preventing future shocks and increasing the capacity of responding to ongoing stressors such as climate change, biodiversity loss and other disasters. There is an urgent need to raise awareness of the role that ocean investments could provide towards supporting our economies, but also responding to environmental and climate challenges.

The transition towards a sustainable and equitable ocean economy should aim at making progress towards the effective protection of ocean ecosystems, sustainable use of marine resources and equitable prosperity for the protection of human wellbeing both now and into the future.

The following provides some recommendations on how to support a sustainable and equitable ocean economic recovery in a post COVID-19 environment:

## **Develop and adopt policies that promote a sustainable and equitable ocean economy to strengthen and sustain recovery efforts.**

National and regional strategies aimed at supporting the development of innovation and growth in the coastal, marine and maritime sectors are important for strengthening national economies and local communities, and can serve as a foundation for sustainable development. Investing in improved governance mechanisms and opportunities to grow the blue economy will help overcome the economic downturn caused from the pandemic while supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities.

## **Incorporate the lessons learnt from the pandemic and economic downturn to ensure economic resilience.**

Increasing our understanding of the vulnerabilities of our socio-economic systems, as well as the ways in which ecosystems and societies respond and adapt, will reduce the impact of future shocks and enable a swift rebound. It is necessary that governments, private sector actors and civil society strengthen their risk management policies and frameworks to ensure a coherent and effective approach to resilience. Central to this will be a comprehensive evaluation of the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis.





## **Integrate cross-cutting issues such as equity (including gender) and climate change.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised awareness on the fact that climate change, ecosystem degradation, public health and social justice are intrinsically linked, and that future pandemics may arise without proactive responses to climate change and biodiversity loss. In our fight for a more just society, many climate and nature-based solutions can bring social co-benefits which can be enjoyed by all and help reduce existing inequalities. In the development of recovery programmes, governments should not lose sight of the importance of the climate change agenda and the promotion of social inclusion and gender equality.

**Avoid the relaxation of policies, regulations and enforcement procedures that would result in negative environmental and social impacts, and would threaten the sustainability of ecosystems and livelihoods.**

In times of crisis, it can be tempting to apply short-term solutions that ignore long-term environmental objectives, but policies and investments triggered under economic stimulus programmes should be aligned with the need for ensuring a sustainable future. Support for specific industries should be conditional on enabling environmental improvements and increasing overall resilience and adaptation to future stressors and disasters. Existing environmental policies and frameworks should not be ignored; on the contrary, economic stimulus should be taken as an opportunity to strengthen them. For example, promoting and enabling sustainable tourism and fishing practices, while ensuring that climate change adaptation and mitigation measures are put in place, could help alleviate existing pressures on the environment and support a more inclusive economy.





**Design and implement insurance schemes, social protection programmes and safety nets for sectors and participants in the blue economy, especially those severely affected by the pandemic, notably the small-scale fishers and the marine tourism sector.**

The livelihoods of those who work in the ocean sectors have been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic with many facing severe economic impacts that may hinder their future well-being. Many individuals working in the sector, notably small-scale fishers, and water taxi operators are not formally registered in social security schemes, have no written contract or are self-employed, leaving them vulnerable to the effects of shocks. Response measures should foster the expansion of social protection coverage to build comprehensive and inclusive national social protection systems. Through social protection, vulnerable communities become more resilient and less vulnerable by receiving alternative sources of income and maximising risk management throughout their lives.







Potential measures are diverse and can include: expanding existing schemes either by increasing the coverage, the benefit value, the duration of existing programmes and/or by introducing extraordinary payments or transfers. The role of community organisations, credit unions, and fisherfolk associations in supporting their members in times of crisis should also be recognised and enhanced. For fishers and others working in the fisheries value chain, increased access to credit and microfinance programmes with reduced interest rates, flexible loan repayment, and options for restructuring of loans and related payment schedules would be a way to improve their safety net.

**Support the management and restoration of coastal ecosystems (e.g., mangroves, coral reefs, wetlands), in order to reduce the vulnerability of coastal communities and infrastructure, and to increase economic opportunities.**

Investments in nature-based solutions, such as reforestation or wetland and mangrove protection and restoration, are cost-effective and sustainable ways to improve resilience to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, while offering opportunities for employment similar to investments for man-made structures. The societal benefits of healthy coastal ecosystems are wide-ranging and include: job creation, improved water quality, wild fish stock recovery, increased coastal resilience, carbon sequestration, and improved ecosystem health. Improving the health of coastal ecosystems will also increase the long-term resilience of the coastal tourism sector.

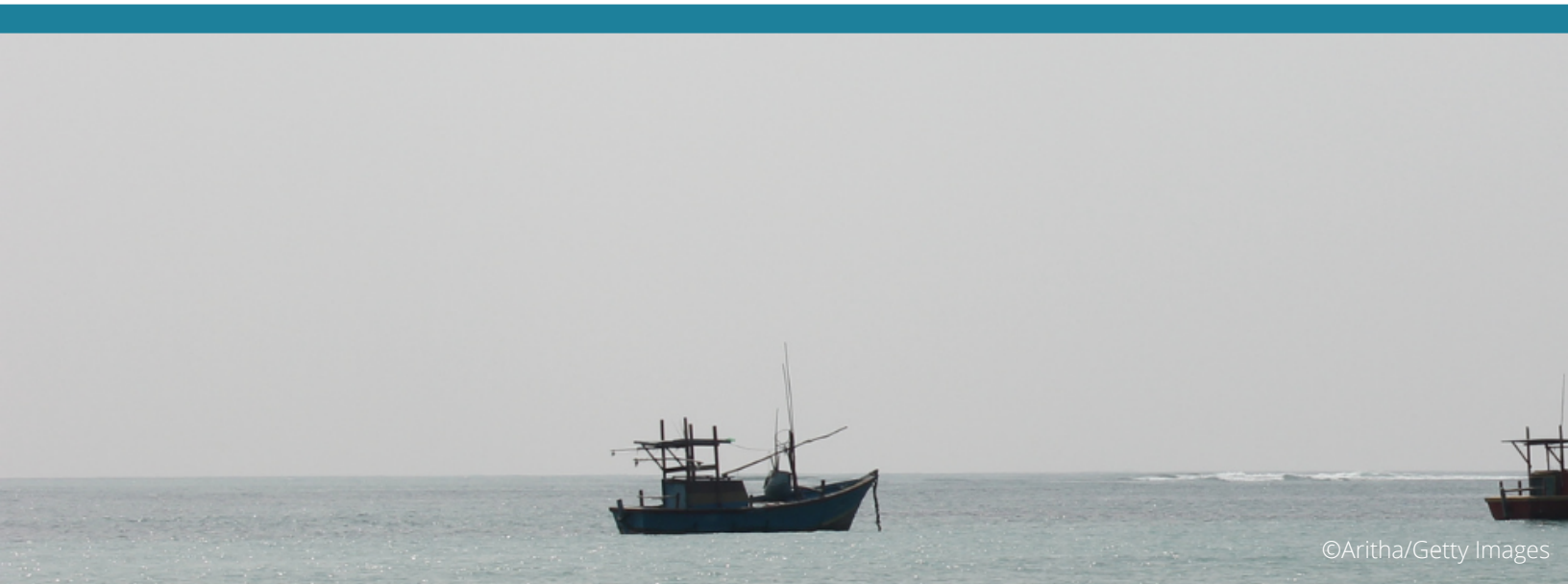
## **Targeting economic and fiscal incentives to promote the adoption of a sustainable and equitable ocean economy, in order to accelerate recovery.**

Concerted policy action will be needed to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and there is an opportunity to integrate new, innovative economic and fiscal instruments that will help with the transition towards an equitable and sustainable ocean economy (blue economy). Although most COVID stimulus packages have so far not prioritized investments towards the blue economy, there is a strong case to be made that financing the ocean sectors will allow for a faster and more sustainable recovery for society at large. Integrating innovative finance mechanisms targeted towards ocean sectors as part of the recovery plans can create incentives and generate revenue for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. Developing policies that will give incentives to private sector investors could help develop new innovative ways to ensure the sustainable use of ocean resources while supporting an economic rebound. Mechanisms such as conservation trust funds, blue carbon payments, private sector concessions and community management approaches all have a role to play in supporting the transition to a sustainable ocean.



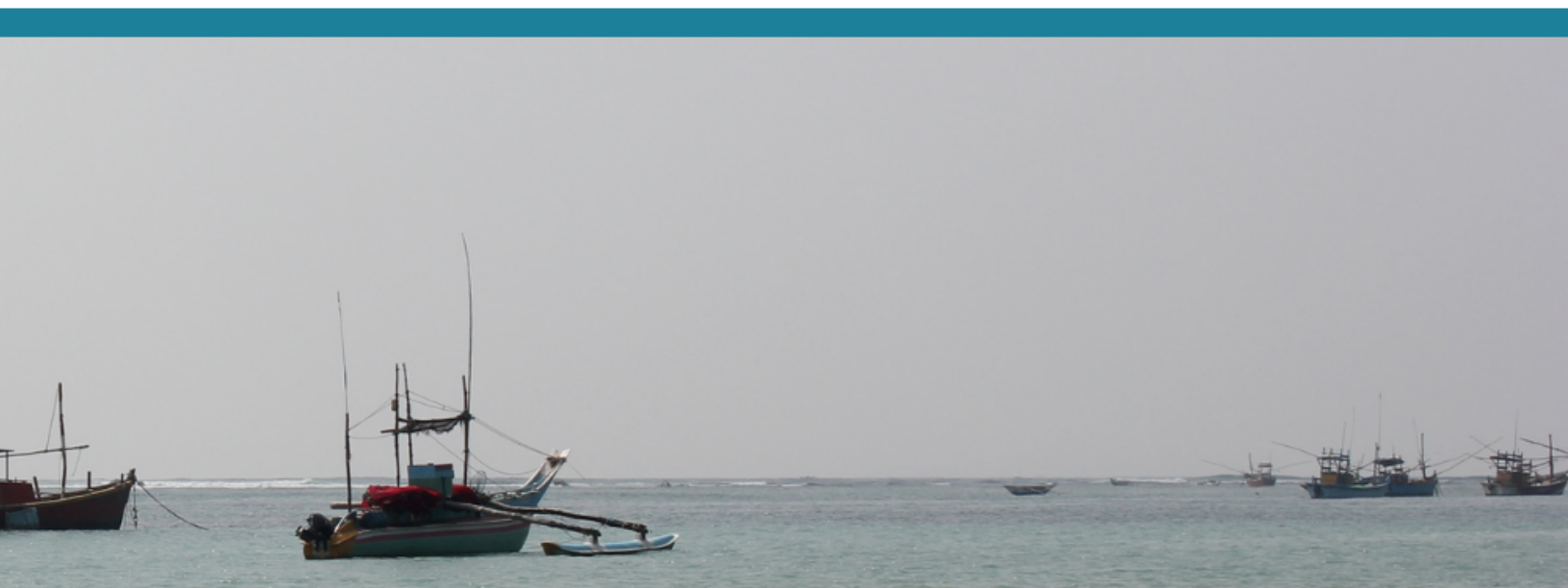
## **Support the fisheries sector through enhanced measures that improve critical infrastructure.**

Disruptions in the transportation of goods and difficulties with accessing foreign markets during the pandemic has highlighted the importance of investing in local supply chains to prevent food shortages and loss of livelihoods. Recovery efforts should aim at enabling the development of local markets and investing in critical infrastructure that will support small-scale fishers adapt to changes that may be sustained after the pandemic. Along with market diversification, recovery policies and investments should aim at developing systems for sustainable harvesting, sustainable aquaculture, traceability, certification, online purchase and improved marketing and transactional processes. The development of e-commerce and home delivery systems, at times designed and initiated by the producers themselves and by local organisations such as fishers' cooperatives, have proven to be successful during the pandemic and may increase the long-term resilience of the sector to future shocks. Private sector actors should be engaged in this transformation to promote the strengthening of SMEs and the role of local stakeholders in enhancing the value chain.



## **Avoid over-harvesting of any fisheries stocks and respect science-driven fishing protocols that maximise catches while ensuring the long-term benefits of fishstock regeneration.**

Any support to the fisheries sector should continue to address overfishing, IUU fishing or other fishing practices that are harmful to ocean ecosystems and compromise the sustainability of marine resources. Regional and national fisheries management plans that include science-driven protocols should continue to be developed and implemented, and stock assessments for important fisheries should be promoted to ascertain status of fish stocks. Recovery plans may also wish to integrate support for sustainable, community-led marine aquaculture projects that could provide alternative livelihoods for fishers while reducing wild catches. Community-led initiatives aimed at developing shellfish and seaweed farming can provide diverse economic opportunities through the development of multiple products. It is recommended that recovery plans include funding for feasibility studies, grants, micro-loans as well as capacity building and training programmes for coastal communities to support the development of the mariculture sector.





## **Producing and digitising ocean-related knowledge and data, and making these available to all stakeholders through open platforms.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has sped up the wide adoption of digitisation. New technologies have, to a certain extent, provided solutions to meet some of the challenges posed by the pandemic and it is anticipated that this fundamental shift in how many businesses and organisations operate is likely to remain. Supporting the development of new technologies for the ocean sectors can help fast track recovery and help us improve our understanding of the oceans. For example, new AI-powered electronic monitoring systems could play an important role in improving how we conduct ocean science. Such technologies could greatly enhance the efficiency of fisheries observer programmes that help the industry collect vital data to enhance catches and promote sustainable fishing.



Many other opportunities exist - from using machine learning-powered interpretation of satellite data and intelligent drones to curtail illegal fishing to connecting sustainable fishers to local consumers via online/phone applications. Digitisation can also play an important role with early warning mechanisms for natural disasters by providing efficient ways to collect information and communicating potential risks to vulnerable populations.

**While the recommendations above apply mainly to governments and intergovernmental organisations, it must be recognised that all sectors of society have a role to play in shaping a recovery that is sustainable and equitable.**

Indeed, Caribbean societies and communities have often responded innovatively to the challenges posed by the pandemic, working towards remediating its environmental, social and economic impacts. There are lessons to be learned from these experiences.







# CLME+

## Interim Coordination Mechanism

Caribbean & North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems

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[www.clmeplus.org](http://www.clmeplus.org)

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